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9R00904A000200020015-1

18 January 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Developments in Costa Rica

1. The attempted revolution in Costa Rica has apparently been frustrated. The rebels apparently intended to have partisans within the country secure an airhead at Villa Quesada, to reinforce them by air, and to advance swiftly on San Jose. They probably calculated that initial success and demonstrated air power would gain for them the adherence of other elements within the country, and that they could thereby win a quick victory before the DIA could effectively intervene. This plan was frustrated, however, by the Costa Rican Government's quick reoccupation of Villa Quesada and by the inhibiting effect of DIA actions on rebel air operations.

2. In present circumstances, the rebels' one remaining chance of success would seem to be to draw the Government forces away from the San Jose area and then to seize that area by means of a fifth column. It is not known whether a fifth column adequate to carry out such a plan actually exists within Costa Rica. The rebels may have committed their maximum internal strength at Villa Quesada. In any case, it is highly unlikely that President Figueres would fall into such a trap.

3. Failing some such strategem, the only reasonable course open to the rebels would be to liquidate their operation as quickly as possible in a manner calculated to cause the least embarrassment to their patrons.

4. Although firm evidence is lacking, it is almost certain that the rebels have received material as well as moral support from the Governments of Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Guatemala. Presidents Somoza and Perez Jimenes have made no secret of their sympathy for the rebel cause and have been careful to commit themselves only to refrain from open "invasion" of Costa Rica with their own armed forces. They consider that the Guatemalan

DOCUMENT NO. 2  
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 DECLASSIFIED  
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C  
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AUTH: HR 200020015-1  
DATE: 3/80 REVIEWER: 372044

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Revolution of 1954, which was construed not to be an "invasion", affords an ample precedent for the present operation against Figueres, whom they denounce as a Communist. By their most recent actions, however, they show that they recognize the implications of the US sale of F-51's to Costa Rica, and that their present primary concern is to clear themselves of direct involvement in the affair.

5. Somoza and Perez Jimenez will resent what they construe as US intervention in behalf of Figueres, but they cannot openly show such resentment while maintaining a posture of non-involvement. Moreover, they must take into account the OAS sanction for US actions. However, they will remain convinced that Figueres has plotted their overthrow or assassination, and that he will continue to do so. Consequently, they will not abandon their own determination to eliminate Figueres. The present revolutionary attempt having been frustrated by OAS (US) action, it is not likely to be repeated in the near future. Other courses of action which Somoza and Perez Jimenez might consider are: (1) to attack Figueres openly with their own forces; (2) to provoke Figueres to adopt such repressive measures in Costa Rica as to alienate public support for his regime and bring about its fall from within; and (3) assassination.

6. Nicaragua and Venezuela probably have the military capability to overrun Costa Rica, but it is highly unlikely that they would attempt to do so in defiance of the United States and the OAS, which in such circumstances would be expected to intervene with superior force. Somoza and Perez Jimenez will probably continue their war of nerves against Figueres, but its effectiveness is rendered doubtful by the outcome of the present revolutionary attempt. Assassination presents the only quick solution from their point of view, but Figueres already guards himself well against such an attempt.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

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